

New Bluefield Town Hall Now Open (October 9, 2006)

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN RICK BOUCHER

Bluefield Town Hall Ribbon Cutting Event

October 9, 2006

Bluefield, Virginia

I am pleased to join with officials of the Town of Bluefield today to celebrate the opening of the new Town Hall. The new facility, which has been constructed with the assistance of federal funding, will replace the former Town Hall which previously experienced frequent and damaging flooding. The former Town Hall has been demolished, and today we celebrate the opening of a state-of-the-art facility that will house the Town's administrative offices, police department, and other official operations in a location which is not susceptible to flooding.

The new municipal facility for the Town is more than 20,000 square feet in size, handicap accessible, and its parking lot is large enough to accommodate 120 vehicles. The municipal building has been located in the Leatherwood Development, which was formerly Leatherwood Farm, and future business development is underway for the property surrounding the Town Hall structure.

The new Town Hall houses the Town's administrative services, police department, Town Council chambers, public works department, parks and recreations department, and the zoning and planning department. These offices began moving into the new facility last month.

Previously, periodic flooding occurred frequently near the former Town Hall and in the Beaver Pond Creek area of the Town of Bluefield. This repeated flooding caused major damages and losses for the Town and the businesses surrounding the Town Hall, and it was great safety concern for the residents and businesses in the Town of Bluefield. The municipal building for the Town of Bluefield has been relocated, outside of the flood plain, with the assistance of federal funding.

The total cost of the demolition of the former Town Hall and the construction of the new Town Hall is more than \$4.5 million. Of this total cost, more than \$700,000 has been provided in federal grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency at my request. The Commonwealth has contributed more than \$200,000 for the project, and the remaining \$3.7 million has been provided locally for the project.

To date, six provisions of federal funding totaling more than \$2.5 million have been provided at my request from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to the Town of Bluefield for flood mitigation projects. In addition to the funding for the Town Hall, I also announced in 2002 a second FEMA grant in the amount of \$300,825 to acquire and remove six residential structures in the Walnut Street area of Bluefield which have experienced periodic flooding from Beaver Pond

Creek. This project is entirely voluntary, and property owners who have agreed to participate in the program will sell their homes to the Town of Bluefield. In 2003 and 2004, I announced two federal grants totaling \$772,000 to enable the Town to continue its flood mitigation efforts. And last year, I announced two additional federal grants totaling more than \$700,000 to address further flooding issues in the Town.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize a number of individuals who have been instrumental in the success we celebrate today.

I want to commend Bluefield Mayor James Jones and former Mayors Donald Harris and William King for their commitment to this project.

I would also like to thank Vice Mayor Rick Taylor for his support of the project.

The efforts of the Bluefield Town Council have been critical to this project and Town Council members Ed Shaffrey, Brent Chambers, Tom Chaffins, and Donnie Linkous deserve our thanks today.

I would also like to thank Town Manager Todd Day and his excellent staff for their work to bring this project to completion.

Finally, I would like to thank my District Director Laura Lee for her persistent and persuasive efforts in support of this project.

The new Bluefield Town Hall is an outstanding example of what can be achieved when citizens and government on the local, state, and federal levels work in aid of a common purpose. I want to offer special congratulations to the residents and staff of the Town of Bluefield who will benefit greatly from the new municipal building.